### Chapter 23 Description paragraph. Outline

When you write a description, you tell what something-a person, an object, or a place-looks like

There are two keys to writing good descriptions:

**SPACE ORDER**

Imagine that you are standing in the doorway of your classroom. How would you describe the room to someone who has never seen it? Here are some possibilities  
• You might start at the left side of the doorway and work your way around the room in a clockwise direction to the right side, ending at the doorway again.  
• You might start at the front of the room and go from front to back, first describing the chalkboard, the teacher's desk, and the area around the teacher's desk. Then you might describe the students' desks in the  
center of the room, and finally the walls and/or windows at the back and sides of the room.  
This kind of organization is called space order. Here are other kinds of space order that you can use to write a description:  
**top to bottom**

**bottom to top**

**right to left**

**left to right**

**far to near**

**near to far**

**outside to inside**

**inside to outside**



The refrigerator in the picture is described in the model paragraph below. As you read the model, look for phrases that tell you the location of things

**The Shared Refrigerator**

1My roommate and I share a refrigerator. 2My roommate's half of our refrigerator is very neat. 3**On the top shelf** is a carton of milk, a pitcher of orange juice, and a bottle of mineral water. 4These are arranged in a straight line on the shelf. **5On the next shelf** are cans of soda.6These are carefully lined up in rows. 7Orange soda is **in the first row**, cola **in the second**, and lemon lime**in the third**.8**On the third shelf**, he keeps dairy foods, such as butter, cheese, eggs, and yogurt.9**On the bottom shelf** sit plastic containers of leftovers. 10 These are neatly arranged by size. 11The large ones are **in the back,** and the small ones are **in the front.**12There are two drawers **in the bottom of the refrigerator**. 1**3In his drawer**, my roommate keeps vegetables and fruit. 14Each item is**in a separate plastic bag** in the drawer. 15 In conclusion, my roommate is an organized person, and his half of our refrigerator really reflects his personality.

**THE OUTLINE**

My roommate's half of our refrigirator is very neat.

A. On the top shelf is a carton of milk, a pitcher of orange juice, and a bottle of mineral water.

B. On the next shelf are cans of soda.

С. On the third shelf, he keeps dairy foods, such as butter, cheese, eggs, and yogurt.

D. On the bottom shelf sit plastic containers of leftovers.

E. There are two drawers in the bottom of the refrigerator.

My roommate is an organized person, and his half of our refrigerator really reflects his personality.

**Use the picture of the refrigerator, the description of the neat half and the outline below it to describe the other half of the fridge. The topic and concluding sentences are given below.**

**The Shared Refrigerator**

Josh and his roommate Drake share a refrigerator. Josh's half of the refrigerator is very neat while Drake's part is in a total mess. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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In conclusion, it is evident that unlike Josh his roommate is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ person,   and his half of the refrigerator really reflects his personality.

#### 23.1 Topic and Concluding Sentence for Descriptive Paragraphs. Specific Details

**Topic and Concluding Sentences for Descriptive Paragraphs**

**The topic part** of a topic sentence for a paragraph of description usually names the person, place, or thing to be described. The controlling idea part usually gives a general impression (beautiful, neat, messy, interesting, unusual, crowded, busy, noisy, and so on.

**Here are some examples of topic sentences for paragraphs of description.**  
The old house looked ready to fall down.  
The cave was a dangerous place to enter.  
The club was full of young people having fun.

**The concluding sentence** of a description may repeat the idea stated in the topic sentence.  It may also give the writer's opinion or feeling about the topic.

**Here are some  examples of concluding sentences for paragraphs of description.**

In short, I doubt the old house will survive one more winter.  
My friend and I were very happy when we got out of the cave.  
To sum up, music, dancing, and flashing lights make clubs exciting and fun.

**Specific details**

The key to writing a good description is to use specific details. When you  describe something, you paint a picture with words. Your goal is to make your reader "see" what you have described. The way to do this is to use a lot of specific details. Specific means exact or precise. The opposite of specific is too general, or vague. The more specific you can be, the better your reader can see what you are describing.  
  
**Here are some examples:**

**Vague**                                                     **Specific**  
a lot of money                                                $500,000  
a large house                                                 a six-bedroom, four-bathroom house  
a nice cara                                                     Lexus  
jogs a lot                                                        jogs three miles in the park every day  
a pretty face                                                   warm brown eyes, shining black hair

23.2 Adjectives

Adjectives describe nouns and pronouns. Adjectives tell what things (or people look like, what kind they are, or how many of them there are.

Adjectives answer the questions: What kind? Which one? and How many?

what kind?      the old car with the broken window  
which one?     the fourth chapter of the book, his car  
how many?     twelve students, a few students  
  
Here are some things to know about adjectives.

**1. Adjectives always come in front of nouns, not after them.**  
twelve talented young musicians

**2. Adjectives can also follow linking verbs.**

be                    The children are happy.  
seem               You seem sad.  
look                 Brides always look beautiful.  
smell               The cookies smell delicious.  
taste                Candy tastes sweet.  
feel                  Silk feels smooth.

**3. English has a kind of adjective called a compound adjective.**

A compound adjective is two or more words that function together as one word.  
A compound adjective often has a hyphen or hyphens between its parts.

ten-week semester

part-time job

two-year-old child

Pay attention that a compoud adjective containing a noun ia always in a singular form.

a six-foot wall (not a six-feet wall)  
a five-dollar bill (not a five-dollars bill)  
a two-year-old child (not a two-years-old child)

Of course, when words such as foot, dollar, and year are nouns, they can be plural.

The wall is six feet high.  
The book costs five dollars.  
The child is two years old.

**4. Nouns can be adjectives.**

the English book  
some tennis balls  
a shoe store  
the Japanese students

**5. Proper adjectives (adjectives referring to nationalities, languages, geographic places, and so on) are capitalized.**

Egyptian custom  
Spanish class  
Cuban government  
Asian languages

**6.-ing and -ed words can be adjectives.**

**swimming** pool  
**cooking** class  
**sleeping** baby  
**boring** class  
**bored** students  
**used** car  
**broken** heart  
**stolen** money

23.2 Order of Adjectives. Cumulative Adjectives

When you write several adjectives in a row, sometimes you must put them in a particular order, and sometimes you can choose your own order depending on the kind of adjective. One kind is called **cumulative adjectives**, and the other kind is called **coordinate adjectives.**

**Cumulative Adjectives**  
Cumulative adjectives always go before a noun. They must be in a particular order. For example, you cannot write the little black poor dog; you must write the poor little black dog.

**Do not put commas between cumulative adjectives.**

The following list shows you the order of cumulative adjectives.  
  
**Kind of Adjective**                                          **Examples**  
I. Articles, demonstrative                                   an, an, the, this, that, these, those, her, their,  
pronouns, possessives                                      Mary's

2. Quantity                                                          two, fifty, some, many, (a) few

3. Opinion                                                           poor, beautiful, interesting, cheerful, expensive                                                                                              
4. Appearance                                                   **Size**                  big, little

**Shape/Length**    round, square, short, long

**Condition**  rusty, broken, hungry, wet, cold   
5. Age, color                                                       old, new, young

                                                                           black, red, blond

6. Nationality, religion                                         Guatemalan, European, Congolese, Asian

                                                                           Catholic, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, Protestant

7. Material, purpose                                           silk, wood, cotton, gold, metal

                                                                           swimming, reading, hiking  
8. Noun used as an adjective                             shoe (as in *shoe store*), wedding (as in *wedding dress*)  
  
It is possible to use several cumulative adjectives in a row, but using too many adjectives confuses your reader and weakens your description. In general, do not use more than three cumulative adjectives in a row.  
  
The bride wore**her mother's beautiful satin wedding** dress

#### 23.4 Coordinate Adjectives

**Coordinate Adjectives**

Coordinate adjectives can go before a noun or after a linking verb. You can write coordinate adjectives in any order, and you separate them from each other with commas. Coordinate adjectives modify nouns in the same way. They describe the same feature. They are often called "equal adjectives." Most coordinate adjectives are adjectives of opinion or evaluation. We don't generally use more than one adjective from any of the other categories together because they sound redundant.

The elegant, wealthy lady looks like a model.

• When coordinate adjectives come before a noun, you may put the word and before the last one (but you don't have to).  
• When two or more coordinate adjectives come after a linking verb, you must put **and** before the last one.

Before a noun                                                     A **hungry, cold, wet** dog sat outside our front door.  
(and optional)                                                     A **wet, cold**, and **hungry** dog sat outside our front door.  
  
After a linking verb                                              The dog was **hungry, wet,** and **cold**.  
(***and*** required)

#### 23.5 Prepositions

**Prepositions**

Prepositions are little words such as of; to, from. in, and at. Most prepositions are one word. A few prepositions are two words (because of) or three words (in front of).

Here is a list of common prepositions.

about                besides                    near             under  
above               between                   of                 until  
across              beyond                     off                upon  
after                 by                             on                with  
against            down                         out               without  
along               during                       outside         according to  
around             except                      over              because of  
at                     for                             since            in addition to  
before              from                          through        in back of  
behind             in                               throughout   in front of  
below              inside                         till                 in place of  
beneath          into                             to                 next to  
beside             like                             toward         out of

Some words, such as**to**, are sometimes prepositions and sometimes another part of speech. Compare these two sentences.

1. We went**to** the supermarket.  
2. We wanted to buy some fruit.

In sentence 1,**to** is a preposition because it is followed by a noun (the supermarket).

In sentence 2, the word **to** is part of the infinitive verb phrase to buy.

#### 23.6 Prepositional Phrases

Prepositional phrases

A preposition is usually combined with a noun or noun phrase to make a prepositional phrase, such as **in the house** or **at six o'clock.**  
Some prepositional phrases answer the question **where.** These are prepositional phrases of **place.** Prepositional phrases of place are useful in space-order paragraphs to show the location of objects in a description.

on the desk  
next to the window  
under the bed  
in front of the house  
opposite the door  
in the closet  
in the middle of the room  
in the distance

Other prepositional phrases answer the question**when.** These are prepositional  
phrases of**time**. Prepositional phrases of time are useful in "how to" paragraphs to give the order of the steps.

at last  
after that  
after class  
on New Year's Day  
before the test  
upon arrival  
in the morning  
at midnight

Other prepositional phrases show**possession:**

(the father) of the bride  
(the name) of my boss  
(the colors) of the rainbow  
(the president) of the company

Others describe or identify **someone or something:**

(the woman) with red hair  
(the student) from Ecuador  
(the man) in the blue shirt  
(the car) with the flat tire

#### 23.7 Using Prepositional pharases to vary sentence openings

**Using Prepositional Phrases to Vary Sentence Openings**

One way to improve your writing is to start sentences with prepositional phrases of time and place. A paragraph in which every sentence follows the same subject-verb-object pattern can be boring. Vary your sentence openings by sometimes starting a sentence with a prepositional phrase. Notice that you put comma after a prepositional phrase at the beginning of a sentence.

USUAL PATTERN:             Get eight hours of sleep before a big exam.  
NEW PATTERN:                Before a big exam, get eight hours of sleep.  
USUAL PATTERN:             I keep snacks in the second drawer.  
NEW PATTERN:                In the second drawer, I keep snacks.

Moving a prepositional phrase is also possible in sentences beginning with **there is/there are** and **there was/there were.**

USUAL PATTERN:           There is a secret hiding place under the stairs.  
NEW PATTERN:               Under the stairs, there is a secret hiding place.  
USUAL PATTERN:           There are several kinds of trees in the park.  
NEW PATTERN:               In the park, there are several kinds of trees.

Sometimes the subject of a sentence can just exchange places with a prepositional phrase of place. This can happen when the sentence contains only a subject, an intransitive verb (a verb that has no object), and a prepositional phrase. In this case, don't use a comma .

USUAL PATTERN:            A comfortable chair is in the corner.  
NEW PATTERN:               In the corner is a comfortable chair.  
USUAL PATTERN:           A picture of Beethoven hangs above her piano.  
NEW PATTERN:               Above her piano hangs a picture of Beethoven.

#### 15.8 Model description paragraphs

**My Tall Nephew**

1The first thing you notice about my nephew is that he is extremely tall -- six feet, six inches tall, to be exact. 2His head sticks up almost a foot above everyone else's.3His hair is short, light brown, and curly, and his eyes are blue. 4His nose is straight, and his mouth curls into a smile easily and often. 5His casual clothes are typical of young people everywhere: aT-shirt and jeans. 6On the front of his shirt, you can read the name of his school in red and blue letters. 7 As your eyes move down his long legs, you notice that his jeans are a little too short. 8Perhaps he can't buy pants to fit his long legs and narrow waist, or perhaps he doesn't care much about clothes. 9On his feet, he wears sneakers. 10Maybe his sneakers were white when they were new, but now they are gray with age and wear. 11 Despite his casual clothes, my nephew is not a casual person. 12He stands as tall and straight as a redwood tree, and you think to yourself, "This is a strong and confident young man."

**My First Car**

1 My first car was old and ugly, but I loved it anyway. 2lts main paint color was black, but it also had blue, green, yellow, and white paint in different places. 3The body was in terrible condition. 4lt had several big dents. 5The lock on the hood was broken, so I had to tie it down with a strong rope. 6Aiso, the back bumper was rusty, and the front window was cracked. 7The inside of the car was also in terrible condition. 8The passenger door handle was missing, so you couldn't open the passenger door from the inside. 9The seats had at least ten large holes in them.10Aiso, the gas gauge was broken. 11lt always showed "full," so I often ran out of gas. 12The speedometer was broken too, so I never knew how fast I was driving. 13Like a first love, my old VW had a few faults, but in my mind it was perfect.(190 words)

**My Desk**

1The inside of my desk looks like a second-hand store. 2Each drawer is full of junk. 3ln the center drawer, you can find paper clips, erasers, pencils, pens, rubber bands, and small bottles of glue. 4I have a small hardware store in my top drawer. 5If you want to repair something,you can find whatever you need there. 6ln the second drawer, I keep snacks in case I get hungry at night. 7Small items of clothing are in the third drawer, and the bottom drawer holds my collection of wind-up toys. 8I play with them during study breaks. 9I have such a variety of things in my desk that I could start a small business, according to my friends.

**My Favorite Place**

1My favorite place on the campus of our school is the lawn in front of the library. 2During my lunch break, I go there to relax with friends. 3ln the center of the lawn, there is a fountain. 4Water splashes from the fountain onto some rocks around it. 5The sound of the splashing water reminds me of a place in the mountains where we go in the summer. 6Under a group of trees at the edge of the lawn, are wooden benches and tables. 7On warm days, students sit at the tables in the shade of the trees to eat their lunches. 8The chatter of students makes studying impossible. 9After lunch it becomes quiet again.

**Description of a picture from Unit 10.2  (Memoirs of a Geisha)**

**The Geisha**

1The first thing you notice about the girl in the photo is that she is rather heavily made-up – her rouged cheeks and bright red lips stand out against her snow-white skin. 2Her eyes are encircled with a neat thin layer of black mascara, which makes her gaze mysterious and rather tense.3Her shiny black hair is combed back from her forehead and made into a high bun decorated with a big pink artificial flower. 4Her nose is straight and delicate, and her mouth is slightly curled into a half smile. 5She is wearing a  beautiful traditional Japanese silk kimono, its wide sleeves making contrast with her thin wrists and slender, long  fingers. 6Despite her pastel colored clothes and tender, fresh look, we feel that the lady has had a hard life behind. 7We know that she is a geisha, a highly accomplished courtesan from a pleasure quarter. 8However, we think to ourselves, "This is a strong and confident young woman who will never bend to circumstances." 9In my opinion, due to this combination of exquisiteness and strength,  geisha style caught on and took over western females.

(186 words)